



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Bulgarian FM Passy, OSCE Chairman in Office

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 15, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is an honor for me, on behalf of the United States of America, to be able to welcome Minister Passy to this Council today for the first time as our Chairman-in-Office. Bulgaria assumes the Chairmanship at an important moment in our organization's history. This organization remains essential to the freedom, independence, and security of people from Vancouver to Vladivostok. We must all work together to assure its continued success.

This is why the United States supports the priorities that the Minister has outlined in his message to us today. They stem from norms, principles, and values dating back 30 years. They are firmly grounded in this organization's history. They spring naturally from our shared base of commitments. Respect for these commitments remains as vital today as it ever did. Without such respect, no real security and stability is possible.

With this in mind, I should like, if I may, to take a minute or two (or perhaps a little more) to highlight a few of the things that the United States considers the most vital for the OSCE this year.

Let me begin with combating trafficking. My government attaches great importance to this task; we will be paying a great deal of attention to how well the OSCE does it this year. The mechanism we approved at Maastricht has given us some necessary tools. Now we have to put them to good use. We must get off to a fast start, so that we have real progress to report to ministers by year's end.

We also attach great importance to the OSCE's efforts to combat anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. The conferences we have agreed to sponsor in 2004 must carry forward the work we began in 2003. They must also lay the groundwork for future practical steps to combat this scourge.

Combating another scourge – terrorism – remains as important as ever, too. We have collectively taken great strides toward implementation of the Financial Action Task Force recommendations to constrict and stop terrorist financing. At Maastricht we also adopted travel document security measures. Our progress in this area has demonstrated the OSCE's continued importance to our common security.

Now we must go further. We must add flesh to the bones of our Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century. One specific thing we can do – while never forgetting that we joined in the Ohrid Border Security and Management process last year and that, as the minister has pointed out, this year OSCE follow-up is expected to that conference – is also to work on a border management concept of our own.

Mr. Chairman, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation remain central elements of the OSCE's work. We are pleased to hear that the Bulgarian Chairmanship has put resolution of the Transnistrian and Georgian conflicts at the top of its "to-do" list. The excellent work of the Dutch Chairmanship and of our heads of mission in Chisinau and Tbilisi have lent new impetus to this task. We cannot falter now.

We have other unfinished business as well. At Maastricht, Secretary Powell expressed regret that we were not in a position to welcome fulfillment of remaining Istanbul Summit commitments on withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova and Georgia. Nevertheless, we do welcome the progress that has been achieved, and we pledge to continue to support efforts to fulfill the Istanbul commitments through the OSCE Voluntary Funds for Moldova and Georgia. We call upon parties, and upon the Chairmanship-in-Office, to make completion of these summit commitments a priority for 2004.

In addition, we must follow through on the initiatives we have launched in the political-military sphere, including tackling excess stockpiles of ammunition. We now need to back up the decision we reached at Maastricht with real resources and to move forward to assist participating States that want and need help.

Mr. Chairman, field missions distinguish the OSCE as a "can do" organization. They have consistently been the source of some of OSCE's greatest successes. They are too valuable in helping states meet their OSCE commitments to give up. Strengthening them is essential to the OSCE's continued relevance in the world today.

Free, fair, and transparent elections also remain a key not just to democratization, but to continued stability and peace in the OSCE region as well. We call on the OSCE and all participating States this year to intensify efforts to strengthen implementation of OSCE election standards. We also call on those States holding elections, among which we number ourselves, to act upon recommendations provided by the ODIHR in their election reports.

We also need to consider how better to coordinate our own work within the OSCE, both in the Secretariat itself and among the bodies and branches of our organization. The Economic Forum and the Annual Security Review Conference deserve continued close attention, too. They are and must remain relevant fora for senior policy-making officials from our capitals.

This year, too, we are obliged to consider how best to undertake more focused outreach to our partners. In this regard, we strongly believe that the OSCE should give meaning to our new partnership with Afghanistan by finding concrete ways to help the Afghan government.

Mr. Chairman, as the foregoing suggests, the United States remains dedicated to this organization. We wish you, Minister Passy, and your team well in the year ahead. We pledge to do our best to help you achieve a successful, collegial, and accomplishment-rich Chairmanship.

I thank you.